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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 004264

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [KU](#) [SUCCESSION](#)

SUBJECT: RUMORS OF A "SHAYKH" UP: KUWAITI WRITER PREDICTS
CABINET CHANGES KEY TO SUCCESSION DEBATE

REF: KUWAIT 3677 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) The succession issue continues to dominate political discussion in Kuwait as factions both inside and outside the Al-Sabah family maneuver for political influence in anticipation of the death of either the Amir or the Crown Prince who are both in poor health. Ahmed Deyain, a liberal columnist with close ties to Shaykh Nasser Al-Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister's son, told Poloff that in two separate "off-the-record" conversations, former Interior Minister and current Amiri Diwan Advisor Shaykh Mohammed Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah told Deyain that the royal family is currently divided between the Jaber branch, led by the Amir and his half-brother Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Hamad and Salem branches who are trying to prevent the Prime Minister from monopolizing political power. (Note: Historically, power has alternated between the Jaber and the Salem branches of the Al-Sabah family. Members of the Hamad branch have very limited influence. End note.)

2. (C) According to Deyain, who wrote a book on succession in Kuwait, Shaykh Mohammed Al-Khalid claimed the Salem and Hamad branches would do everything they could to ensure Crown Prince Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah became the next Amir, "even if they have to take him in a wheelchair to the National Assembly to take the Amiri oath." (Comment: Shaykh Saad is widely believed to lack all but the most basic physical and mental functions. Insisting Shaykh Saad become Amir would be only a temporary solution, allowing Salem family members to appoint key executive positions in Shaykh Saad's name before he abdicated the amirship. End comment.) If Shaykh Saad became Amir, Shaykh Mohammed Al-Khalid said Shaykh Sabah would become Crown Prince and Shaykh Saad would appoint a new Prime Minister, Deyain informed Poloff.

3. (C) Deyain believed the Prime Minister could "absorb tensions" within the ruling family, explaining that Shaykh Sabah had two options: move to replace the Crown Prince, or reshuffle the Cabinet, placating family opponents with key ministerial positions. The second option was more likely, Deyain argued. He predicted no decision would be taken until after the Amir's death, at which time National Guard Chief Shaykh Salem Al-Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the fourth highest GOK official in order of protocol, and other top family members would negotiate with Shaykh Sabah for ministerial portfolios in exchange for their support for his ultimate accession to the amirship. Deyain hoped the royal family would make a decision on succession soon in order to break the political deadlock that has emerged over the issue.

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